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The Great Plateau of Northern Rhodesia. Being Some Impressions of the Tanganyika Plateau  
by Cullen Gouldsbury; Hubert Sheane

Review by: Ellsworth Huntington

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*The Great Plateau of Northern Rhodesia.* Being some impressions of the Tanganyika Plateau. By CULLEN GOULDSBURY and HUBERT SHEANE. Longmans, Green and Company, London: Edward Arnold. 1911. Pp. 360.

The authors of this volume have both spent many years in South Africa in the service of the British South Africa Company. They have lived in intimate contact with the natives and know exactly the conditions of which they speak. Their volume consists in reality of two distinct portions: one, by Mr. Gouldsbury, is a discussion of the general aspect of Northern Rhodesia, and of its relation to foreigners in general, and to the British Government in particular. The other or ethnographic section, by Mr. Sheane, is devoted entirely to the habits and character of the natives. The two sections do not stand separately, but have been dovetailed together by chapters in a way which perhaps adds variety, but which fails to produce the maximum effect because from chapter to chapter ones attention is changed from one phase of the subject to the other.

In general treatment this volume does not differ from many others of the better class of books on foreign countries. The European section opens with a readable account of the discovery of northern Rhodesia and of the very little that we know about its history. After this come interesting chapters dealing with the changes that have been introduced by foreign occupation; the relation of British to native law; the duties of British officials; their yearly travels among the natives; and their diversions in the way of hunting. One of the last chapters takes up the question of missions in a fashion which is sympathetically critical and at the same time appreciative; while the final chapter discusses the possibilities of the future.

The other section is devoted to the ordinary ethnographic subjects beginning with the position of the kings and chiefs, passing from this to native law and punishments, and so on to animism, witchcraft, diseases and native character. The authors are appreciative of the good in the native and they exonerate him from some of the worst charges brought against him. They recognize in him large powers of reasoning, much capacity for abstract and spiritual thought and a good degree of mental receptivity, memory, and zeal for knowledge. On the other hand, they show very clearly the gross superstition and sensuality which prevail. According to their view the lack of sexual control is probably the greatest ele-

ment in preventing children who seem bright and capable from progressing mentally after they reach the age of puberty.

One of the best features of this book is the way in which it puts the life of the native side by side with the influences and changes which follow in the wake of the white man. Apparently the introduction of European rule has been extraordinarily peaceful. No fighting whatever has occurred and the people have submitted almost with pleasure. This is largely the result of their peaceable, placid character. No feature of the book is more noticeable than the frequency with which both authors speak of the peaceful quietness of life in northern Rhodesia. The climate is highly uniform, the means of subsistence can be obtained easily and there is nothing to stir men's minds to great activity. The chief excitements of the natives are petty local quarrels, largely about women. The handful of Europeans, partly officials and partly missionaries, with practically no traders, lead a life of extreme monotony, and yet seem to find a good deal of satisfaction in it. It appears as if the nature of the country had a soothing influence on the human mind. How far this will prevent progress remains to be seen, but it can scarcely fail to be an important factor.

ELLSWORTH HUNTINGTON.

*The Story of the Zulus.* By J. Y. GIBSON, London, Longmans, 1911, Pp. 338.

What is called the "South African native question" presents one of the most difficult and perplexing problems in all Africa. Often by the application of military force the imposition upon South African natives of European authority carried with it the occupation of native lands, the execution or exile of native kings and chiefs, the slaughter of numerous native peoples, and engendered all the horrors and bitter hatreds of cruel war and invasion.

In the presence of the superior number of the natives one of the re-actions of the political conduct of Europeans in South Africa is that the local government and resident white population seem to be dominated by the psychological influence of a deep social and political fear, which prevents harmony and justice between the races and which consigns the natives to inequality in opportunity and to a fixed and constitutional status of civil and social inferiority.

*The Story of the Zulus* by Mr. J. Y. Gibson, is important not only because it throws considerable light upon South Africa's greatest social and political problem—the "native question"—but as well